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[Death and the Future Life](#) [Ecumenism Awareness](#)

Hope - Chapter 99 from *Father Seraphim Rose: His Life and Works*

by Hieromonk Damascene

The 'gates of hell' will not prevail against the Church, but they have and certainly can prevail against many who consider themselves pillars of the Church, as is shown by Church history.

—Archbishop Averky¹

Orthodoxy," wrote Archbishop Averky, "is not merely some type of purely earthly organization which is headed by patriarchs, bishops, and priests who hold the ministry in the Church which is officially called 'Orthodox.' Orthodoxy is the mystical 'Body of Christ,' the head of which is Christ Himself....

"The Church, it is true, may not be removed completely from the world, for people enter her who are still living on the earth, and therefore the 'earthly' element in her composition and external organization is unavoidable; yet the less of this 'earthly' element there is, the better it will be for her eternal goals. In any case, this 'earthly' element should not obscure or suppress the purely spiritual element—the matter of the salvation of the soul unto eternal life—for the sake of which the Church was both founded and exists."²

These words were very much along the lines of Fr. Seraphim's thinking. Although Fr. Seraphim was a devoted member of the Orthodox Church, he knew he could place no ultimate hope in any church organization. That is why, in the letter to an Orthodox priest quoted earlier, he wrote: "Orthodox shepherds today more than ever must beware of placing their hope in the 'organization,' but rather must be constantly looking upward to the Chief Shepherd Christ."³

In another letter, having described the small Orthodox community in Etna, Fr. Seraphim stated: "We ourselves have a feeling—based on nothing very definite as yet—that the best hope for preserving true Orthodoxy in the years ahead will lie in such small gatherings of believers, as much as possible 'one in mind and soul.' The history of the twentieth century has already shown us that we cannot expect too much from the 'Church organization'; there, even apart from heresies, the spirit of the world has become very strong. Archbishop Averky*, and our own Bishop Nektary also, have warned us to prepare for catacomb times ahead, when the grace of God may even be taken away from the 'Church organization' and only isolated groups of believers will remain. Soviet Russia already gives us an example of what we may expect—only worse, for the times do not get better."⁴

Nevertheless, the fact that Fr. Seraphim did not place final hope in church organizations did not mean that he at any time ceased to believe in the invincibility of the *Orthodox Church*—the mystical Body of Christ against which *the gates of hell shall not prevail* (Matt. 16:18).

In Orthodox dogmatic theology, the Church has been defined not as an organization but as a *theandric* (God-human) *organism*. Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit gives life to the Church, and the believers—both those still on earth in the "Church militant" and those already in Heaven in the "Church triumphant"—are included in the Church's Body. Thus, the twentieth-century Serbian theologian Fr. Justin Popovich wrote that "the Church is ... a God-human

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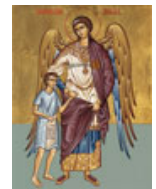
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organism and not a human organization."⁵ Likewise, Fr. Michael Pomazansky stated: "The life of the Church in its essence is *mystical*; the course of its life cannot be entirely included in any 'history.' The Church is completely distinct from any kind whatever of organized society on earth.... As all the members of our body comprise a full and living organism which depends upon its head, so also the Church is a spiritual organism in which there is no place that the powers of Christ do not act."⁶

In viewing the Church as a God-human organism headed by Christ, Fr. Seraphim was able to look above and beyond the errors and sins of the Church's human members. Following the Scriptural injunction to *trust not in princes, nor in the sons of men* (Psalm 145:2), he instead put trust in Christ Who welcomes sinful men and women into His Body and offers to save them from sin. In a passage from *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* which Fr. Seraphim translated into English, Fr. Michael Pomazansky wrote: "The sanctity of the Church is not darkened by the intrusion of the world into the Church, or by the sinfulness of men. Everything sinful and worldly which intrudes into the Church's sphere remains foreign to it and is destined to be sifted out and destroyed, like weed seeds at sowing time. The opinion that the Church consists only of righteous and holy people without sin does not agree with the direct teaching of Christ and His Apostles. The Saviour compares His Church with a field in which the wheat grows together with the tares, and again, with a net which draws out of the water both good fish and bad. In the Church there are both good servants and bad ones (Matt. 18:23–35), wise virgins and foolish (Matt. 25:1–13)."⁷

In a letter of 1972, Fr. Seraphim expressed his faith in the organism of the Church—a faith which prevented him from getting upset even when he beheld others in the Church who treated it like a political organization. To an American convert who was angry when he saw church leaders acting like petty organizational men, Fr. Seraphim counseled:

"On the whole, our bishops are not known as poor administrators.... If anything, their great temptation lies in taking the 'organization' side of the Church too seriously and thereby sometimes 'quenching the spirit' of some members of the Church's organism. Those of us who can must simply try to keep this spirit alive—as you have written, precisely: 'to turn from trusting in the "organization" and cleave to the "organism."' Thereby we not only can be of service to the Church, but we become the bishops' best helpers—for we are working together with them in the true service of the Church's 'organism,' the Body of Christ. If we thereby sometimes suffer misunderstandings and offenses from each other (and we are all guilty of this, not just bishops!), the Church gives us the spiritual means to forgive and overcome these.

"In particular, we are sad to see you so angry at Fr. G— ... and we refuse to entertain any hard feelings about him. If he has placed himself in mistaken positions, it was doubtless from sincere motives, which were nonetheless potentially harmful because they were *political*, i.e., directed toward the 'organizational' side of the Church at the expense of the organism. Frankly, Vladika John during his lifetime was not understood even by many of his fellow bishops, precisely because he was always first and foremost living in the organism of the Church and never let the organization take precedence. *That is his testament to us all*, and don't worry if you think you don't understand it right now; it can't really be 'understood,' but only experienced and suffered through as you grow in the Church and her tradition. God will send you occasions for 'understanding' it in your heart.

"Do not trust your mind too much; thinking must be refined by suffering, or it will not stand the test of these cruel times. I do not believe that the 'logical' ones will be with Christ and His Church in the days coming upon us; there will be too many 'reasons' against it, and those who trust their own minds will talk themselves out of it."⁸

In a letter of 1975, addressing the problems created in the Church by the super-correct faction, Fr. Seraphim again expressed his hope in the Church which transcends human errors and passions: "Deep down we are peaceful about all this, for we know the Church is stronger than any of those who have been deceived into thinking *they* are the Church, and they always fall away, making those who remain in the Church more sober thereby."⁹

During a lecture at the 1979 St. Herman Pilgrimage, Fr. Seraphim spoke about how God is leading the Church:

"The more you 'get your own wings' in Orthodoxy, by reading more, being exposed to more, having more contact with Orthodox people, receiving the grace of God more, the more you begin to be able to 'feel your way' in the whole realm of Orthodoxy. You begin to see that there are many wise things which in the beginning you might have thought were not so wise. Even if the people involved in these things are not wise themselves, nevertheless God is guiding the

Church. We know that He is with the Church until the end, and therefore there is no reason to go off the deep end, to fall into apostasy and heresy."

In 1981, when writing an article about Fr. Michael Pomazansky, Fr. Seraphim affirmed what both Fr. Michael and Archbishop John had taught him about how the Church is preserved from extremes both on the right and on the left:

"Fortunately, the genuine Orthodox tradition has a way—with the help of God, Who looks after His Church—of preserving itself from the extremes that often try to deflect it from its course. This self-preservation and self-continuity of the Orthodox tradition is not something that requires the assistance of 'brilliant theologians'; is the result of the uninterrupted 'catholic consciousness' of the Church which has guided the Church from the very beginning of its existence. It is this catholic consciousness which preserved the wholeness of Russian Orthodoxy in the 1920s when the extreme reforms of the 'Living Church' seemed to have taken possession of the Church and many of its leading hierarchs and theologians**; this same catholic consciousness is at work today and will continue to preserve Christ's Church though all the trials of the present day, just as it has for nearly 2000 years."¹⁰

Finally, at the 1982 Pilgrimage, Fr. Seraphim ended what turned out to be the last talk of his life by expressing his hope that his listeners—most of them converts to Orthodoxy—would be true members of Christ's Body, the Orthodox Church. Countering what he called "the worldly opinion ... that the Church is only a set of buildings or a worldly organization," Fr. Seraphim said we are called "to a deeper awareness of Christ's Church and of how our 'formal membership' in it is not enough to save us."¹¹ He quoted the words of the modern-day Romanian confessor Fr. George Calciu about what it means to be in the Church:

"The Church of Christ is alive and free. In her we move and have our being, through Christ Who is her Head. In Him we have full freedom. In the Church we learn of truth, and the truth will set us free (John 8:32). You are in Christ's Church whenever you uplift someone bent down in sorrow, or when you give alms to the poor, and visit the sick. You are in Christ's Church when you cry out: 'Lord, help me.' You are in Christ's Church when you are good and patient, when you refuse to get angry at your brother, even if he has wounded your feelings. You are in Christ's Church when you pray: 'Lord, forgive him.' When you work honestly at your job, returning home weary in the evenings but with a smile upon your lips; when you repay evil with love—you are in Christ's Church. Do you not see, therefore, young friend, how close the Church of Christ is? You are Peter and God is building His Church upon you. You are the rock of His Church against which nothing can prevail.... Let us build churches with our faith, churches which no human power can pull down, a church whose foundation is Christ.... Feel for your brother alongside you. Never ask: 'Who is he?' Rather say: 'He is no stranger; he is my brother. He is the Church of Christ just as I am.'"

"With such a call in our hearts," Fr. Seraphim concluded, "let us begin really to belong to the Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church. Outward membership is not enough; something must move within us that makes us different from the world around us, even if that world calls itself 'Christian' or even 'Orthodox.'... If we truly live the Orthodox worldview, our faith will survive the shocks ahead of us and be a source of inspiration and salvation for those who will still be seeking Christ even amidst the shipwreck of humanity which has already begun today."¹²

Because he trusted in the power of Christ to heal His Church, Fr. Seraphim cherished hopes for the future healing of the wounds of the Orthodox Church in Russia. He found this hope especially well expressed in the writings of his most beloved Russian New Martyr, Bishop Damascene Tsedrick of Starodub (+1935), which he translated for the book *Russia's Catacomb Saints*.

Being caught in the early years of the anti-Christian Soviet experiment, Bishop Damascene was a sign in advance for Orthodox Christians who will one day be caught in the reign of Antichrist. He stood up against Metropolitan Sergius' capitulation to the Soviet regime, and for this reason he was arrested and sent into exile. Seeing the Sergian deviation as only a wound in the Body of Christ which would one day be healed, the exiled bishop sent beautiful epistles to console and strengthen his persecuted flock. In one of them he wrote:

"Those children of God who have not fallen under the pressure of the satanic hurricane and have not been bruised by the pieces of the great shipwreck, are clearly aware of the situation and with complete calmness and confidence will undertake the building of the true Church of Christ on the foundation of it which still remains, without excessive nervousness, without unnecessary complaints; for the process of its building will comprise the whole meaning of their life....

"Let it be that darkness has temporarily covered the earth (from the sixth to the ninth hour), let it be that the lamps of certain Churches are hidden under bushels so as not to be put out by the satanic whirlwind.... After a short time of rest from the Lord (perhaps even the time when the darkness will imagine that its work has already been completed), the lamps will be revealed, will come together, will ignite a multitude of others which had been put out, will pour together into a great flame of faith which, when efforts are made to put it out, will burn yet brighter....

"Does one need to step back before the attack of militant atheism? May this not be! No matter how few we might be, the whole power of Christ's promises concerning the invincibility of the Church remain with us. With us is Christ, the Conqueror of death and hell. The history of Christianity shows us that, in all the periods when temptations and heresies have agitated the Church, the bearers of Church Truth and the expressors of it were few, but these few with the fire of their faith and their zealous standing in the Truth have gradually ignited everyone.... The same thing will happen now if we few will fulfill our duty before Christ and His Church to the end.

"The fearless confession of faith and of one's hope and a firm standing in the Church's laws are the most convincing refutation of the Sergian deviation and are an unconquerable obstacle to the hostile powers directed against the Church. *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom* (Luke 12:32)."¹³

Time has proved that Bishop Damascene's position was the true one and that his hope was not in vain—for the Orthodox Church, as the Body of Christ, is indeed a living organism from which Christ expels all that is impure.

In 1988, the thousandth anniversary of the Baptism of Rus, the fervent prayers of believers both in Russia and abroad were answered by God, and the situation in Russia began to change. In 1991, within months after the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov were revealed and carried in procession to Diveyevo Monastery, the totalitarian atheist regime fell, thus changing the situation that produced the spiritual disease of Sergianism. In the decade that followed, through the heavenly intercessions of St. Seraphim and the host of Russian Saints, Russia has experienced what has been called the largest religious revival in history.

In *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, Fr. Seraphim predicted that when the godless regime in Russia falls, "the Sergianist church organization and its whole philosophy of being will crumble to dust."¹⁴ This is indeed happening at the present time in Russian history. For those who view the Church as an invincible *theandric organism* as did Bishop Damascene and Fr. Seraphim, it is clear that Sergianism as an organization and a "whole philosophy of being" is indeed being replaced by something else, as the Church organism is healed and corrected by Christ with the cooperation of its members. Clear proof of this is found in the fact that, in the year 2000, the Sobor of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, responding to the fervent desire of the people who comprise the Body of Christ, canonized 1,200 New Martyrs and Confessors, including numerous bishop-martyrs who protested against Metropolitan Sergius' bowing down to the anti-Christian authorities. Among the newly canonized hierarchs was none other than Bishop Damascene. During his lifetime, Metropolitan Sergius' policy of capitulation appeared victorious, but in the end it was not him but the suffering, outcast Bishop Damascene who was proclaimed a saint by the Orthodox Church.

This consideration provides a valuable lesson in what the Orthodox Church of Christ actually is, and how "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" even if, for a time, some church leaders succumb to temptation and pressure from the world.

With his hope in the future healing of the Russian Church, Fr. Seraphim hoped in the future restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to liturgical communion with the main body of the Russian Orthodox Church inside Russia, the Moscow Patriarchate. In this he was of one mind with the best tradition of the Russian Church Abroad; as will be remembered, it had been Archbishop John who had first instilled such hope in him. In 1960, referring to the Russian Church inside Russia as the "suffering Mother" of the Church Abroad, Archbishop John had written: "The Russian Church Outside of Russia spiritually is not separated from her suffering Mother. She offers up prayers for her, preserves her spiritual and material wealth, and in due time she will unite with her, when the reasons for their disunity shall have vanished."¹⁵

Together with Archbishop John, Fr. Seraphim understood that the division between the two Russian Churches, though real, was only on an organizational level, and did not touch the deeper unity which existed in the Church organism. Thus, when outward circumstances changed in Russia, this unity should be affirmed outwardly. Writing as a member of the Church Abroad, Fr. Seraphim stated in a letter: "Our Church has no communion with Moscow. But our Church recognizes this as a temporary situation, which will end when the Communist regime comes to an end."¹⁶

Elsewhere, writing about Fr. Dimitry Dudko, who belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr. Seraphim affirmed that "Once the political situation in Russia that produced 'Sergianism' will have changed, a full unity in the faith will be possible with such courageous strugglers as Fr. Dimitry."¹⁷

With the changes in Russia, culminating in the canonization of the New Martyrs and Confessors in Moscow, the path is now open for Fr. Seraphim's hope to be realized. If liturgical communion is restored between the two Russian Churches, they will be following the example already set by the two Serbian Orthodox Churches which have entered into communion again after decades of separation during the Communist era.

Often when divisions prevail in the Church, this is due to lack of faith in the Church and in Christ's power to heal its members. An understanding of the Church as a God-human organism helps us to be more patient when we notice human error in the Church, and less desirous of seeing divisions persist. We will be more accepting of God's Providence, which, as He Himself has told us, allows tares to grow alongside the wheat until the Last Judgment. In times of tribulation we will be able to remain steadfast and faithful to the traditions and teachings of the Church, without ourselves contributing to any schism or ill-will among members of the Church.

For Fr. Seraphim, this understanding of the Church as a living organism grew and deepened over time. With this deepening, Fr. Seraphim was at the same time able to rise above jurisdictional divisions in the Church, which were after all on an organizational level. By the end of his life, he distanced himself considerably from the isolationism that many wished to see prevail in his own Russian Church Abroad. Fr. Alexey Young describes well the change that occurred in Fr. Seraphim over the years:

"Fr. Seraphim was a very strict isolationist about other jurisdictions in the first several years (roughly 1966–75) I had contact with him.

"I believe that at this time his own experience of other Orthodox groups was somewhat limited and academic, and so his strict views were formed on an almost purely ideological basis. This changed rather abruptly, however, as he began to see 1) the effects of isolationism on the Synod Abroad, and 2) the increasingly shrill fanaticism of the [super-correct] 'party' in the Synod. He was at first uncomfortable, and then openly appalled at the utter lack of charity on the part of the so-called 'zealots.' He was himself a 'zealot,' but not to the exclusion of charity. Near the end of his life he once said to me: 'I regret many of the "pro-zealot" articles we published in *The Orthodox Word* in the earlier years: we helped to create a monster, and for that I repent!' He was quite emphatic about that....

"In the last year or two of his life Fr. Seraphim often told me that he had begun to commune lay men and women from other jurisdictions that came to him. He said: 'I know this would be frowned upon, but these people come and they are hungry for spiritual guidance and nourishment and ... what can we do? Turn them away?' When I asked if he wasn't afraid of being 'denounced' by the ultra-zealots in the Synod he replied: 'You don't know me very well if you think I'd be worried about that. Whether I get in trouble or not, I KNOW that this is the right thing to do!'

"In general on this subject, my sense is that Fr. Seraphim, while respecting outward rules and regulations, always tried to penetrate to the inward 'spirit.' From the early 1970s on (as I recollect it) he saw more and more clearly that we must rise above jurisdictional differences—not in order to become innovators and betrayers—but in order to rescue as many souls as possible who were searching for the 'fragrance of true Christianity' (as he loved to call it). Thus, while avoiding at least the appearance of scandal, and not trying to 'provoke' anyone in any way, he nonetheless cast the nets far and wide. And, as we know, he caught many 'fish.'"¹⁸

What Fr. Alexey says is borne out by Fr. Seraphim's letters and Chronicle entries. In 1980, when people from Antiochian Orthodox churches in California began making pilgrimages to the monastery, Fr. Seraphim expressed his joy at seeing the fervency of their faith. "All are very eager young Orthodox," he wrote, "—a real revival is taking place in America!"¹⁹ Some of these pilgrims were cradle Orthodox from various ethnic backgrounds, others were converts. In time three of the lay pilgrims from the Antiochian Church would be ordained as priests.

In December of 1981, Fr. Seraphim wrote in a letter: "Recently we were visited by another Antiochian priest (from Los Angeles)***, and just the fact of our friendship is a source of strength which helps them to struggle more themselves. What the end will be, jurisdictionally speaking, I don't know. But we must have the image of the Russian Church Abroad adjusted away from the 'fanatic party line,' which up to now has tried to take over—and whose failure is now becoming evident."²⁰

In another letter, Fr. Seraphim responded to the questions of one of his spiritual sons, who, being in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, wanted to marry a woman in the "rival" Orthodox Church in America (Metropolia). The woman's priest, being devoted to his own jurisdiction, refused to marry the couple until the young man left the Russian Church Abroad. "Boldly unite yourself to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church," the priest wrote to the young man. "A step in this direction would modify my opinion considerably."

"Help!" wrote the young man to Fr. Seraphim. "I need your advice and prayers as to what to do. The whole situation is very confusing to me, and of course to [my fiancée] also...."

In this dilemma of nuptial happiness vs. jurisdictional divisions, Fr. Seraphim wrote to his spiritual son: "I think he [the priest] is being overly dramatic about the whole matter. The question of 'jurisdictions' (in the case of the O.C.A. and our Church Abroad) is not such a crucial one that it would prevent marriage, even if the partners were to belong to different jurisdictions; to be sure, oneness of mind on this question is preferable, but in practice this is worked out by the couples themselves."²¹ A few days later, Fr. Seraphim wrote a conciliatory letter to the priest.

Fr. Seraphim also maintained that jurisdictional divisions should not prevent one from receiving Holy Communion. In his talk at the 1979 St. Herman Pilgrimage, "Orthodox Christians Facing the 1980s," he related an example from Russia which he had read in the writings of Fr. Dimitry Dudko: "Fr. Dimitry says he talked to one person in the Catacomb Church. This person was totally cut off from the Sacraments because in his area the Catacomb Church was totally absent. He was sort of surviving, keeping up the faith, being loyal. He had a spiritual talk with Fr. Dimitry; and, as Fr. Dimitry says, 'When he got finished talking to me, he received Communion from me.' If you're looking from the strict point of view that one must be with the Catacomb Church at all costs, you can say he shouldn't have done that.**** But from the pastoral, spiritual point of view, in this particular circumstance that was the best thing for him: to receive the Sacraments and God's grace so that he would have the strength to keep struggling. And Fr. Dimitry said that, as a result, at once this man came alive. Before he was just struggling by his own will, with no access to the Sacraments. Now he had the Sacraments and suddenly he felt new life come into him, because the grace of God acts. If he had continued without Communion—who knows?—he might have finally become discouraged and fallen away from Christ altogether. In such a case we cannot judge by the letter of the law. We have to judge—and that's what Fr.

Dimitry is constantly doing—according to the spiritual needs of the moment."²²

Fr. Seraphim believed that, as the Church entered into more difficult times, it would become ever more crucial for believers to look beyond jurisdictional divisions. In a letter of 1978 he wrote:

"We feel the signs of the times point more and more to a coming 'catacomb' existence, whatever form it may take, and the more we can prepare for it now the better.... Every such monastery or community we look on as a part of the future catacomb 'network' of strugglers for true Orthodoxy; probably in those times (if they will really be as critical as they look from here) the 'jurisdictional' question will recede into the background."²³

We have spoken earlier of how Fr. Seraphim never altered his basic stance against ecumenism and reform in the Church. In his later years, however, when he saw people calling those of other jurisdictions "heretics" because they went to ecumenical gatherings, he took pains to define this stance more clearly. In his "Defense of Fr. Dimitry Dudko," he wrote:

"Some would-be zealots of Orthodoxy use the term [ecumenism] in entirely too imprecise a fashion, as though the very use of the term or contact with an 'ecumenical' organization is itself a 'heresy.' Such views are clearly exaggerations. 'Ecumenism' is a *heresy* only if it actually involves the denial that Orthodoxy is the true Church of Christ. A few of the Orthodox leaders of the ecumenical movement have gone this far; but most Orthodox participants in the ecumenical movement have *not* said this much; and a few (such as the late Fr. Georges Florovsky) have only irritated the Protestants in the ecumenical movement by frequently stating at ecumenical gatherings that Orthodoxy *is* the Church of Christ. One must certainly criticize the participation of even these latter persons in the ecumenical movement, which at its best is misleading and vague about the nature of Christ's Church; but one cannot call such people 'heretics,' nor can one affirm that any but a few Orthodox representatives have actually taught ecumenism as a *heresy*. The battle for true Orthodoxy in our times is not aided by such exaggerations."²⁴ In another place Fr. Seraphim said: "The excessive reaction against the ecumenical movement has the same worldly spirit that is present in the ecumenical movement itself."²⁵

Likewise, while not altering his position on the Church Calendar question, Fr. Seraphim warned against exaggerating the importance of this issue and thereby causing needless fighting and division. In his talk at the 1979 St. Herman Pilgrimage, after speaking at length about inspiring developments in the Orthodox Church of Africa, Fr. Seraphim addressed the concerns of super-correct Orthodox who were put off by the fact that the African Orthodox converts were on the New Calendar:

"Now some who wish to be correct will remind us that the Orthodox Church in Africa is under the Patriarch of Alexandria, who is on the New Calendar; and they might even think that we should have no contact with them. About this I'd like to say a word.

"To preserve the ancient traditions and canons of the Church is a good thing. And those who woefully and needlessly depart from them will be judged by God. Those who introduced the New Calendar into the Orthodox Church in the 1920s and later, and who thereby brought division and modernism into the Church, will have much to answer for.

"But the simple people of Africa understand nothing of all this, and to preach the correct Old Calendar to them could produce nothing more than a squabble over theoretical points that would only interfere with their simple reception of the Orthodox Faith. Western converts are often skilled in debating such theoretical points, even to the extent of writing whole tomes and treatises on the canons and their interpretation. But this is an Orthodoxy of the head, full of the spirit of calculation and self-justification. What is most of all needed, especially in the perilous days ahead, is the much deeper Orthodoxy of the heart, which the simple letters we receive from Africa reveal."²⁶

At one time Fr. Seraphim had cherished hopes for a united "Orthodox Zealot" movement to counteract the deceptions of the last times. "Years ago," he wrote in 1979, "when Fr. Herman and I were young and naive, we dreamed of a vigorous, single-minded movement of zealous Orthodoxy among young converts, Russians, Greeks, etc. Alas, we have become older and wiser and no longer expect much. All our confessors of Orthodoxy have their all-too-human side also.... In so many Orthodox zealots, it seems to me, there is an intellectual narrowness, combined with some kind of political orientation, that produces factions right and left and loses sight of the 'common task' which we thought (and still think) is so clear, especially when you contrast it with the crude renovationism that is going on now in the Metropolia, Greek Archdiocese, etc."²⁷

But if Fr. Seraphim abandoned hope in any "zealot movement," he never lost hope in the movement of souls who come miraculously to Christ in His Orthodox Church out of all kinds of calamities, sins, and desperate circumstances. This was how the whole of Christianity was founded: sinful people saw grace in Jesus Christ, and their souls responded; they saw that they were drowning, and He saved them; and out of them Christ built His Church, which will last till the end of time.

In his talk at the 1981 St. Herman Pilgrimage, entitled "The Search for Orthodoxy," Fr. Seraphim shared his optimism about the fact that individuals all over the world, out of all kinds of situations, were finding the true image of Jesus Christ in Orthodoxy:

"Americans, both young and old, weary of the rootless and arbitrary teachings of contemporary Protestantism, are discovering the true and profound Christianity of Orthodoxy.

"Roman Catholics, in the midst of a disintegrating church structure, are finding that Orthodoxy is everything they once thought Roman Catholicism to be.

"Young Jews, both in the Soviet Union and the free world, are increasingly finding the answer to the present-day spiritual vacuum among their own people in conversion to Orthodoxy....

"In Russia, the search for roots is obvious, and is bound up with the recovery of national awareness among the Russian people after sixty-some years of atheism and destruction of Russian religious institutions. If one tries to return to what was before the atheist regime, one comes to nothing but Orthodoxy.

"Something similar is happening on a smaller scale to the Orthodox young people of Greece who are rejecting the modern Westernism that has poisoned Greek society for the past century and more; these young people are finding their roots in the Orthodox past of Greece, and above all in the center of Orthodox life, its monasticism."²⁸

As we have seen, Fr. Seraphim was especially interested in the conversion of peoples in Africa to Orthodox Christianity, having corresponded with, published articles about, and helped support Orthodox African converts for

many years. "What of Africa?" he asked in his lecture. "What kind of Orthodox roots can Africans find? As surprising as it may seem to us, Orthodoxy—and Christianity in general—is growing faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world, and in a matter of some years Africa will become the leading Christian continent, both in number of believers, and even more in the fervor of their faith. Tertullian, the second-century Christian writer, has said that the human soul by nature is Christian, and this is proving true in the eagerness of the once-pagan African peoples to accept Christianity, which has only been preached below the Sahara in the last one hundred years. Roman Catholicism and various Protestant sects have attracted many followers in Africa, but those who really seek for the roots of Christianity are finding Orthodoxy. Perhaps not all of you know the story of the two Anglican seminarians in Uganda in the 1920s who in their studies came to the conclusion that only Orthodoxy was the 'true old religion' from which all the modern sects of the West have deviated. Today the African Orthodox Churches in Uganda, Kenya, and other countries of East Africa are examples of the fruitfulness of the search for Orthodoxy today. With hardly any help from the outside Orthodox world, they have come to the fullness of Orthodoxy, avoiding the pitfalls which many Western converts have fallen into."²⁹

After Fr. Seraphim's repose, a mission on the other side of the African continent—in Zaire—saw great growth, thanks especially to the righteous Hieromonk Cosmas Aslanidis (+1989) and other missionary monks from Mount Athos.³⁰ Later a Greek priest from Australia, Archimandrite (now Bishop) Nektarios Kellis, began an Orthodox mission in Madagascar, which is now flourishing.³¹ Thousands of souls have been baptized in both these countries, worshipping Jesus Christ in humility, poverty, and truth. Fr. Seraphim would have rejoiced to see this.

The return of American Protestants to their historical Christian roots also drew Fr. Seraphim's attention. "In America," he said, "the need for roots is obvious: the fragmentation of Christian sects and the diverse understandings of Christian doctrine and practice—based upon personal interpretation of Scripture and of Christian life—point to the need to return to the original, undivided Christianity, which is Orthodoxy. Just in the past few years more and more Protestants have been finding their way to the Church. There is even a group, organized as the 'Evangelical Orthodox Church,' which has come all the way from the Billy Graham-type 'Campus Crusade' movement of the 1950s to a deep awareness of the need for sacraments, hierarchy, historical continuity with the ancient Church, and all the rest that Orthodoxy has to offer as the true Apostolic Christianity. This movement has still much to say in contemporary America, and there are ways we Orthodox can help it."³² In 1987, five years after Fr. Seraphim's repose, the Evangelical Orthodox movement was received into the Orthodox Church through the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America, and since that time it has done much to reach out to disillusioned Protestants and bring them into the Church.

Bound up with the search for roots, Fr. Seraphim pointed out, is the search for *stability*: "Orthodoxy's stability is the unchanging truth which it has received and passed on from generation to generation, from the time of Christ and His Apostles to our own day. It is no wonder, then, that it is attracting souls that are hungry most of all for truth—the truth that comes from God and gives meaning and a point of anchor for all those tossed about on the sea of this life.

"But possibly the deepest and most attractive thing about Orthodoxy today is its message of *love*. The most discouraging thing about today's world is that it has become so cold and heartless. In the Gospel of St. Matthew our Lord tells us that a leading characteristic of the last times will be that *the love of many will grow cold* (Matt. 24:12); and the Apostle of love, St. John the Theologian, records our Lord as saying that the chief distinguishing mark of His disciples is the love they have one for another (John 13:35). The most influential Orthodox teachers of recent times have been those most filled with love, who attract people to the riches of the Orthodox Faith by their own example of overflowing, self-sacrificing love: St. John of Kronstadt, St. Nektarios of Pentapolis, our own Archbishop John Maximovitch....

"Being filled with the Gospel teaching and trying to live by it, we should have love and compassion for the miserable humanity of our days. Probably never have people been more unhappy than the people of our days, even with all the outward conveniences and gadgets our society provides us with. People are suffering and dying for the lack of God—and we can help give God to them. The love of many has truly grown cold in our days—but let us not be cold. As long as Christ sends us His grace and warms our hearts, we do not need to be cold."³³

Father Seraphim's hope for the conversion of souls to Orthodoxy was rooted in his belief that the Orthodox Church, being truly the Church that Christ founded, possesses the fullness of Christ's grace and all the means He has given mankind to prepare for His Kingdom. In a letter to Alison written in 1963, not long after his own conversion, Fr.

Seraphim had affirmed that "Orthodoxy is the preparation of souls for this Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. The schismatic Churches have, in lesser or greater measure, forgotten this truth and compromised with the world; Orthodoxy alone has remained otherworldly. The aim of the Orthodox life (of which we all fall miserably short) is to live in this life in constant remembrance of the next life, in fact to see even in this life, through the grace of our Lord, the beginning of that life."³⁴

Fr. Seraphim's hope in the Church was ultimately a hope in that other life, for it is by believing in Christ and participating in the life of His Body on earth that we can live forever in His Body in heaven. This—eternal life in Christ, in the Kingdom of Heaven—was Fr. Seraphim's final hope.

Endnotes

The following abbreviations have been used in these Notes:

ER—Eugene Rose

FSR—Fr. Seraphim Rose

LER—Letter of Eugene Rose

LFSR—Letter of Fr. Seraphim Rose

JER—Philosophical Journal of Eugene Rose, 1960–62

OW—*The Orthodox Word*

SHB—St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California

CSHB—Chronicle of the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, written by Eugene/Fr. Seraphim Rose

Letter, Journal and Chronicle dates are according to the civil calendar, except where a Church feast day is indicated, in which case both the Church (Julian or "Old" Calendar) and civil (Gregorian or "New" Calendar) dates are given.

Most of the letters of Fr. Seraphim cited in this book were preserved in carbon copy by Fr. Seraphim himself; some were sent by their recipients to the author for publication in this book. In some of the references to letters the names of the recipients have been abbreviated, and in others the names have been omitted altogether in order to protect the privacy of living persons.

The book *Letters from Fr. Seraphim* by Fr. Alexey Young includes many letters that were not preserved by Fr. Seraphim in carbon copy. When we have quoted these letters directly from this book, references to the book have been given.

* This was written a few months before Archbishop Averky's repose in 1976.

** The reform agenda of the failed "Living Church" or "Renovationist" movement in Russia included making provisions for a married episcopacy and the remarriage of widowed clergy.

*** This was Fr. Paul O'Callaghan, assistant pastor of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles, later dean of St. George Cathedral in Wichita, Kansas.

**** I.e., because Fr. Dimitry was a priest of the Moscow Patriarchate.

1. Archbishop Averky, *Stand Fast in the Truth* (Mt. Holy Springs, Penn.), p. 2.

2. Archbishop Averky, "What Is Orthodoxy?" *Orthodox Life* (May–June 1976), pp. 2–3.

3. LFSR to Fr. Valery Lukianov, Feb. 1, 1975.

4. LFSR to Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, Feb. 3, 1976.

5. Archimandrite Justin Popovich, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ* (Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), p. 24.

6. Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (SHB, 1984), pp. 224, 226.

7. Ibid., p. 238.

8. LFSR to A., Oct. 31, 1972.

9. LFSR to Alexey Young, Oct. 17, 1975.

10. [FSR], "Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky: Theology in the Ancient Tradition," OW, no. 96 (1981), p. 77. Later published in Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (SHB, 1983), p. 14.

11. FSR, "Living the Orthodox Worldview," OW, no. 105 (1982), pp. 176.

12. Ibid.

13. I. M. Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, pp. 226–27.

14. Ibid., p. 21.
15. Archbishop John Maximovitch, "The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia," *OW*, no. 37 (1971), p. 79.
16. LFSR to J. H., Sept., 16, 1980.
17. [FSR], "In Defense of Fr. Dimitry Dudko." *OW*, no. 92 (1980), p. 127.
18. Letter of Fr. Alexey Young to the author, Aug. 1, 1991.
19. CSHB, June 24, 1980.
20. LFSR to Fr. Alexey Young, Dec. 5, 1981. In *Letters from Fr. Seraphim*, p. 227.
21. LFSR to T., Feb. 22, 1979.
22. "Orthodox Christians Facing the 1980s," a talk given at the 1979 St. Herman Pilgrimage. Transcript of oral delivery.
23. LFSR to Fr. C., June 1, 1978.
24. [FSR], "In Defense of Father Dimitry Dudko," p. 130.
25. "Orthodox Christians Facing the 1980s." Transcript of oral delivery.
26. Ibid.
27. LFSR to Fr. Theodore, June 6, 1979.
28. FSR, "The Search for Orthodoxy," *OW*, no. 226 (2002), pp. 243–44.
29. Ibid., p. 244.
30. See "Priest-monk Cosmas of Grigoriou, Enlightener of Zaire," *OW*, no. 147 (1989), pp. 232–40, 249–56; and Demetrios Alanides and Monk Damascene Grigoriatis, *Apostle to Zaire: The Life and Legacy of Blessed Father Cosmas of Grigoriou* (Thessalonica, Greece: Uncut Mountain Press, 2001).
31. See Matina Kouvousis, "Miracle in Madagascar: The Orthodox Mission Today," *OW*, no. 198 (1998), pp. 17–23.
32. FSR, "The Search for Orthodoxy," pp. 244–45.
33. Ibid., pp. 246–47, 253–54.
34. LER to Alison, July 15, 1963.

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